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ABSTRACT

Washington State's Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) provides a comprehensive, family-focused preschool program designed to help low-income children succeed in the public school system and help families support and participate in their children's success. Findings from an ongoing longitudinal study of the ECEAP program indicate that the cognitive and motor skills of children involved in ECEAP have improved significantly, in many cases surpassing the national norms for their age group. In addition, parental expectations and involvement are found to be positively related to children's improvements in measurements of cognitive and physical development. This report documents the first 3 years of an 8-year study of ECEAP. The first section of the report presents an overview of the ECEAP Program and discusses the ECEAP philosophy, program components, state leadership and local implementation, the characteristics of ECEAP children and families, program attrition, highlights of the 1990-91 program year, and anticipated challenges. The next section explains the study design and assesses program outcomes in the areas of child cognitive and physical development, child social and emotional well-being, child health and nutrition, and family well-being and empowerment. Finally, plans for the coming year are outlined. (AC)

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Longitudinal Study

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ECEAP

1991 Longitudinal Study and Annual Report

Washington State's Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program

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This Report was Prepared By:
Child, Family, and Community Program
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
101 S.W. Main, Suite 500
Portland, Oregon 97204

Photos by Mary Fitzgerald

ANNUAL REPORT -- 1991

It is my pleasure to introduce the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program 1991 Longitudinal Study Report. The results confirm that this preschool program is exceeding all expectations for success and lasting results.

This report, which documents the first three years of the eight-year study, shows that the cognitive and motor skills of children involved in ECEAP have significantly improved. In many cases, their skills surpass the national norms for their age group. These are impressive results considering that at the beginning of their involvement in ECEAP, most children test below national levels for these developmental milestones.

In another important finding, the report notes that parental expectations and involvement go hand-in-hand with children's improvements in measurements of cognitive and physical development. The children who make the greatest gains have parents who are very involved in their preschool experience.

The Longitudinal Study is possible because of support from local ECEAP staff and the school district principals, administrators, and teachers who interview participating families and evaluate and test children. Their assistance is invaluable.

ECEAP has grown rapidly since it began in 1986. Starting with 1,000 children, ECEAP now serves more than 5,000 families. In 1993 the program will expand again to provide comprehensive preschool, nutrition, health, and other social services to more than 7,000 low-income children and their families. The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program is proving to be one of the most insightful and rewarding investments ever made for Washington's future.

Booth Gardner

Governor Booth Gardner

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ECEAP: Program and Highlights

Six years ago, Governor Booth Gardner and the Washington State Legislature made an active commitment to what has become a national concern: laying the foundation for the healthy development and future success of our children. Billed as a smart investment, the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) has evolved from a small pilot project in 1985 into a statewide delivery system of comprehensive services for young children and their families. The rewards of this community-based, family-centered, comprehensive preschool program are proving to be many, for the state and for its children and families. *This report describes the ECEAP program and highlights findings from an ongoing longitudinal study which is revealing ECEAP's effectiveness for children and families.*

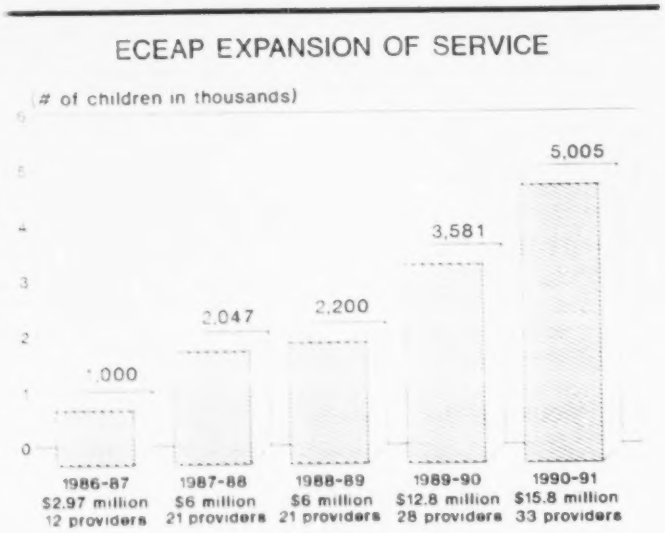

Figure 1

ECEAP has rapidly expanded, receiving continued bipartisan support. Together with Head Start, ECEAP will expand to serve all income-eligible four-year-olds by the 1992–93 Program Year. The number of children enrolled in ECEAP has increased five-fold, from 1,000 children in 1986 to over 5,000 in 1991 (see Figure 1). In all, ECEAP has served nearly 14,000 children and families during its first five years and will expand to serve nearly 7,000 children and families per year starting in the 1992–93 Program Year.

ECEAP Philosophy

ECEAP's approach is based on the following principles:

- a young child can benefit substantially from a comprehensive preschool program that fosters development, identifies and remedies health and developmental problems, and increases skills in preparation for success in school;
- a child's family is the primary contributor to the child's development and progress;
- access to community resources designed to support the child's development and learning, as well as the family's well-being, should be maximized; and
- low-income children, in particular, should have the opportunity to counteract the toll poverty takes on them and their families.

The ECEAP Program

ECEAP is a "whole-child," comprehensive, family-focused preschool program designed to help low-income children succeed in the public school system and to assist families in supporting and participating in their children's success. ECEAP staff, community leaders, and parents collaborate to define and develop programs that are most appropriate to the children and families living in their community.

Because many factors affect a child's ability to learn and develop normally, ECEAP is comprised of four interactive components: education, health, parent involvement, and social services.

Education. Children are prepared for entry into school through a developmentally appropriate learning environment that: (1) fosters intellectual, social, physical, and emotional growth; (2) emphasizes early identification of and intervention in problems interfering with learning; and (3) eases the transition from preschool to the public school system. Local ECEAP providers develop and select a developmentally based curriculum that incorporates readiness skills (such as recognition of numbers, shapes, and colors); language skills; gross and fine motor skills; social-emotional and self-concept development; and age-appropriate health, nutrition, and personal safety education. Additionally, field trips and visitors to the program broaden children's awareness and understanding of the community in which they live.

Cultural awareness and ethnic pride are actively promoted and integrated within ECEAP's educational component. When a majority of children speak a common language other than English, at least one teacher or aide who speaks that language actively participates in group and center experiences. In cases where a few children or one child speaks a different language, then one adult, often a community resource person or volunteer, works closely with the children or child.

In general, ECEAP providers strive to expose all children to new ideas, concepts, and experiences and create in all children an excitement for discovery and learning.

"ECEAP was very instrumental in [my son's] growth and has helped him a lot in areas such as his interaction with other kids, personal hygiene, and motor skills."

—ECEAP parent

Health. ECEAP conducts or provides for health screenings within the first 90 days of a child's enrollment in the program. Medical, dental, mental health, and the nutritional needs of each child are evaluated. ECEAP's remediation of problems identified through the screenings includes referral to community services, identification of community resources, and/or provision of services or funds as a last resort.

ECEAP health staff assist in bringing children up to date on immunizations against certain vaccine-preventable diseases. ECEAP staff have found that nearly two out of five children have not received all of the immunizations they need by the time they are of age to enroll in ECEAP.

In areas where fluoride is not available through the drinking water, ECEAP arranges for fluoride treatments to be provided to children whose parents grant their consent.

Nearly 40 percent of the children who began participating in the longitudinal study in the 1990–91 Program Year received fluoride treatments through ECEAP.

Few factors in a child's physical and mental development are as critical as adequate nutrition. All children in ECEAP receive at least one meal a day during the time when they are assembled in a classroom setting. Meals and snacks for children are designed to satisfy the Minimum Daily Requirements of as many nutritional elements as possible, and careful attention is paid to the nutritional needs of young children in the context of their culture when planning the menus. Education about good nutrition is included in the curriculum to encourage lifelong healthy eating habits.

> *"The [ECEAP] staff has helped us teach our child the important things before kindergarten."*
>
> —ECEAP parent

Parent Involvement. Recognized as the primary source of educational instruction and motivation for their children, parents are directly involved with children in the classroom and during home visits. ECEAP provides opportunities for parenting skills training and support group participation based on the needs expressed by parents. Parents are also encouraged to be involved in local program decision making through their program's parent-run policy council and the committees their council forms to work on specific issues.

Social Services. ECEAP's commitment to family empowerment is expressed in part through the assistance staff provide to families in accessing social services or programs they need or in reducing or eliminating assistance they no longer need. ECEAP's family service staff conduct a family needs assessment when the family enrolls in the program. ECEAP staff refer families to community resources and provide awareness and educational training to families in response to the needs that are identified.

> *"This has been a very good learning experience and has really helped our family become more self-dependent and more secure."*
>
> —ECEAP parent

Cost of Services. The cost of providing comprehensive services and support to these children and families has been shared through the collaborative efforts of ECEAP, state agencies, and community service providers. The average statewide per child reimbursement rate in the 1989–91 Biennium was $3,120. Yet ECEAP providers have been able to stretch state dollars by collaborating with other service providers, at times supplementing the actual budget per child by as much as $500. This expenditure—up to $3,600—compares favorably to what Washington taxpayers spend on every child who is retained ($2,546 per grade), who requires special education (up to $8,828 per year), or who drops out of school before graduation (as much as $200,000 in lost taxes, welfare, and criminal justice expenditures).

State Leadership and Local Implementation

ECEAP is housed at the state level in the Department of Community Development, Community Assistance Division, and operates locally through many types of organizations, including school districts, local government agencies, nonprofit organizations, child care providers, tribal organizations, and community colleges. ECEAP has evolved into an increasingly community-focused and needs-driven family service. From the outset, local flexibility in program design has been encouraged once certain baseline requirements, such as a 32-week program year, are met. Contractors must meet the established program standards for ECEAP, but great flexibility in how they are met is provided. Three program organizational structures, designated as "center-based," "home-based," and "locally designed," describe most current local ECEAP delivery models.

Center-based ECEAP programs provide children and families with:

- at least ten hours per week of group programming spread over three or more days;
- at least one and one-half hours of staff and parent contact time per month; and
- a home visit with the child's family at least twice a year to facilitate education.

Home-based ECEAP programs provide:

- an emphasis on training parents to be effective educators;
- weekly 90-minute visits during which staff members train, role model, and encourage parents to teach their children; and
- a weekly peer group experience for children.

Locally designed ECEAP programs provide:

- the opportunity for a community to design a program around its unique needs; and
- combinations of elements of center-based and home-based options or a weekly schedule that differs from the typical center-based program.

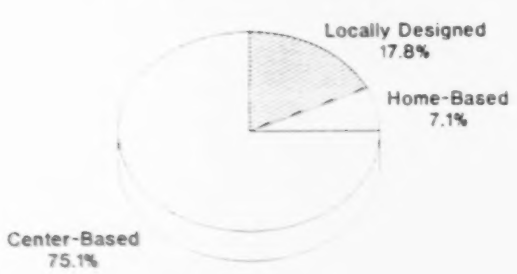

Figure 2

Figure 2 displays the percentages of children and families participating in center-based, home-based, and locally designed programs between 1988 and 1991 (three program years). *The combined total of over 11,000 children is used here and in subsequent figures in this section to provide a context for understanding the study findings for a sample of these children who are participating in the ECEAP Longitudinal Study.*

ECEAP Children and Families

An ECEAP child is typically four years of age, not yet in kindergarten, and from a family whose income during the last 12 months has been at or below the federal poverty guidelines. The broad intent of ECEAP, to provide enhanced learning opportunities to children at risk of school failure, allows local programs to fill up to 10 percent of their enrollment with children who are at risk for such reasons as neglect, abuse, or disabling conditions, regardless of family income. In addition, one of every 10 ECEAP enrollment slots statewide is targeted to Native Americans and the children of migrant and seasonal farm-workers, since both populations currently have especially limited access to developmental and social services.

Enrollment data indicate that ECEAP serves a diverse group of children and families. The following figures profile the diversity of children and families enrolled during 1988–89, 1989–90, and 1990–91 (the first three years of the ECEAP Longitudinal Study). Percentages are based on the total number of children and families enroiled during this time (N = 11,267).

Ethnic Diversity. Although children of color currently comprise less than 15 percent of all of Washington's children, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black*, Hispanic, Native American, and other minority ethnicities were represented by 42 percent of the children who enrolled in ECEAP between 1988 and 1991. As Figure 3 shows, nearly 55 percent of ECEAP children during that time were Caucasian.

ETHNICITY

(n = 11,267 ECEAP children)

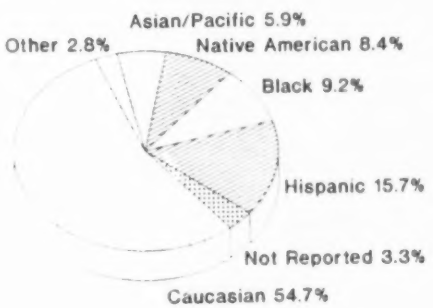

Figure 3

Primary Language. Eighty-one percent of ECEAP children enrolled between 1988 and 1991 used English as their primary language. Of those who did not, over nine percent spoke Spanish primarily and three percent spoke Asian languages primarily. The diversity of languages spoken by ECEAP children is not completely reflected in these percentages, however. During the three-year period being used for this depiction, children speaking over 15 languages other than English or Spanish enrolled in ECEAP, including Laotian, Tagalog, Arabic, and Ethiopian. The City of Seattle ECEAP reports that 39 different languages and dialects are spoken among their Asian language-speaking families alone.

* The term "African American" is preferable, but in reporting these study data and findings, "Black" must be used since this was the response provided on the enrollment forms used during ECEAP's first several years. The enrollment form has since been changed.

Family Configuration. Figure 4 shows that nearly 52 percent of the ECEAP children enrolled between 1988 and 1991 were living with their mothers only and an additional two percent were living with their fathers only. Just over 40 percent lived with two parents (both biological parents or one biological parent and a step-parent).

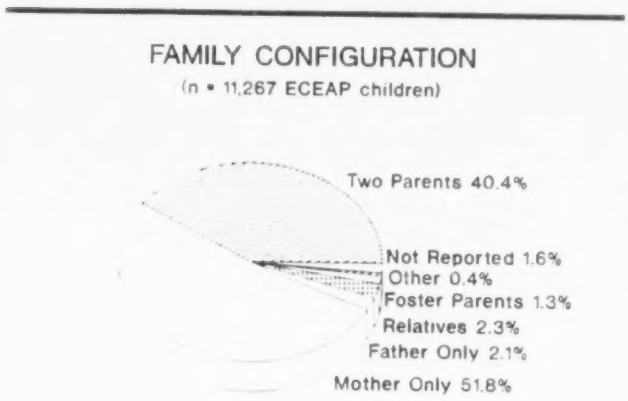

Figure 4

Interviews with families participating in the ECEAP Longitudinal Study indicated that less than half of the study children had been in the same living arrangement since birth. Spring interviews with these families indicated that 15.8 percent of the study children had experienced a change in their living arrangement during the course of their time in ECEAP (approximately six months).

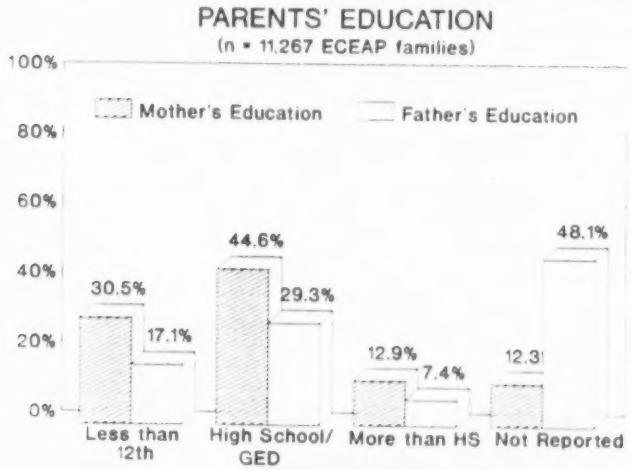

Figure 5

Parents' Education. Figure 5 displays the education levels attained by ECEAP parents. Between 1988 and 1991, over 30 percent of ECEAP mothers, and over 17 percent of ECEAP fathers, reported that they did not have a high school diploma or a general equivalency degree (GED). Currently, the state average high school dropout rate is over 23 percent. Nearly 45 percent of ECEAP mothers and nearly 30 percent of ECEAP fathers reported having completed 12 grades. Data for fathers may have differed if more than 52 percent had reported their educational status.

Parents' Employment Status. One in four mothers were working outside their homes at the time their children enrolled in ECEAP; nearly 70 percent of mothers were not. Data provided for only 55 percent of fathers indicated that two out of five fathers were working outside their homes. Had employment information been provided for more fathers, this percentage might have been different. Over 11 percent of all ECEAP children are living with a single, working parent. Thirty-six percent of all ECEAP children are living with a single, unemployed parent.

Family Income Sources. ECEAP families receive income from a variety of sources, including wages, public assistance, child support, social security, unemployment, and pension. While the majority of families report their incomes to be derived primarily from public assistance, increasing numbers of families enrolled in ECEAP are from the "working poor," i.e., working at jobs with wages that leave them with incomes below 100 percent of the federal poverty level. Figure 6 shows that, of the 11,267

families enrolled in ECEAP between 1988 and 1991, 62 percent received public assistance and 39 percent were earning wages. Three percent of families were receiving unemployment benefits, which meant someone had lost a job within the past year, and over four percent were receiving social security benefits, which were typically related to disability. Only five percent of families reported receiving child support, in spite of the fact that over one-fourth of ECEAP mothers reported being divorced or separated.

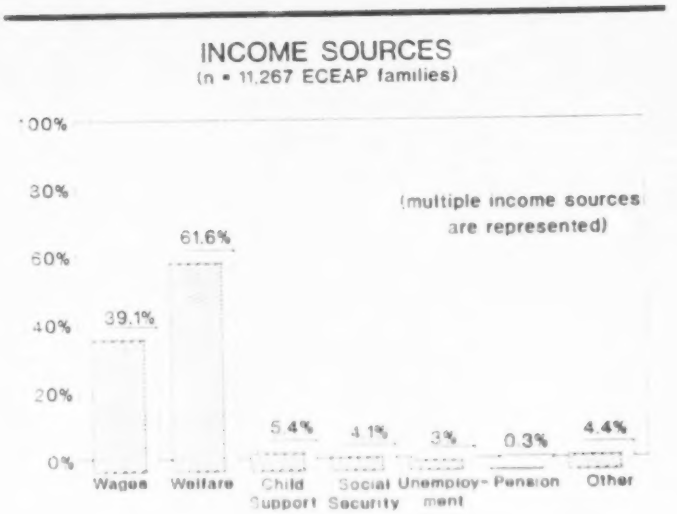

Figure 6

Family Income Level. The eligibility standard for enrollment in ECEAP is 100 percent of the federal poverty level. While the 100 percent level is widely considered a minimal income, given housing, transportation, health care, and child care costs, the average ECEAP family's income is well below the 100 percent allowable level. Figure 7 illustrates that for the last three years the average four-person ECEAP family has been living on an income at least 32 percent below the allowable standard. In the 1990–91 Program Year, an ECEAP family of four lived on $737 per month (approximately 50 percent of families received food stamps and medical aid). This income level allowed families $24 per day for housing, food, transportation, clothing, medical care, dental care, furniture, home heating and electricity, and miscellaneous items. If a family spends a standard 30 percent on housing, only $17 per day remains for all other expenses. Low-income housing, however, is more often unavailable and low-income families must pay up to 50 percent of their incomes for housing. Additionally, Washington households now pay an average of $100 per month for energy costs.

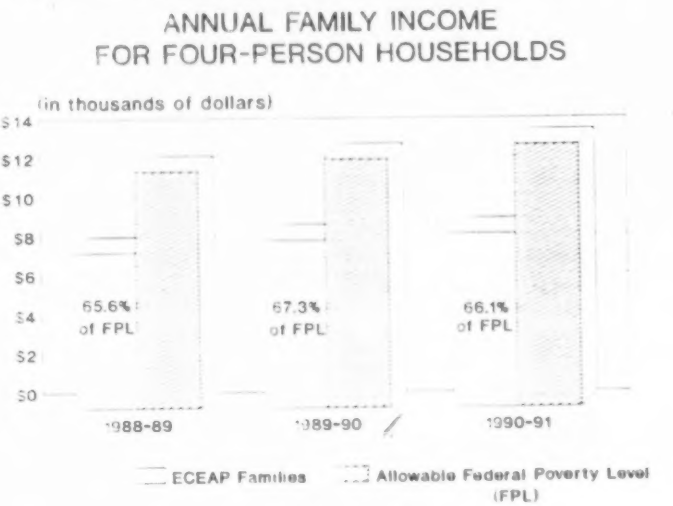

Figure 7

Family Stress. Interviews with ECEAP families have revealed the extent to which many of these families are experiencing personal and family stress. Significant life events, such as finding a new job, enrolling in school, getting married or divorced, having a baby, and moving—whether they are positive or negative—can produce

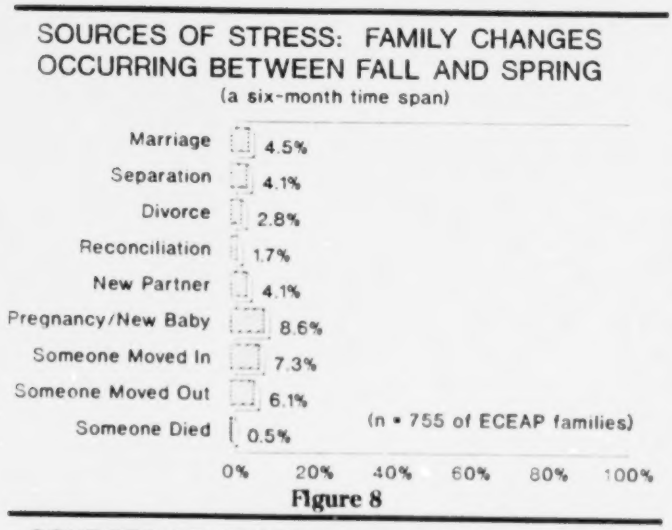

Figure 8

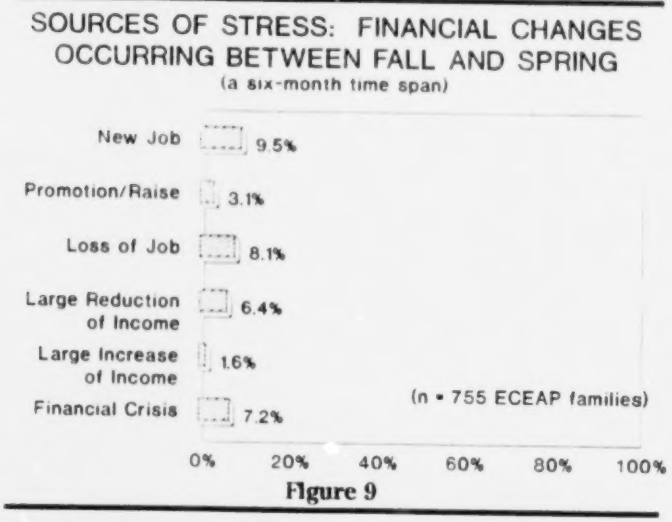
SOURCES OF STRESS: FINANCIAL CHANGES OCCURRING BETWEEN FALL AND SPRING
(a six-month time span)
New Job 9.5%
Promotion/Raise 3.1%
Loss of Job 8.1%
Large Reduction of Income 6.4%
Large Increase of Income 1.6%
Financial Crisis 7.2%
(n = 755 ECEAP families)
0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Figure 9

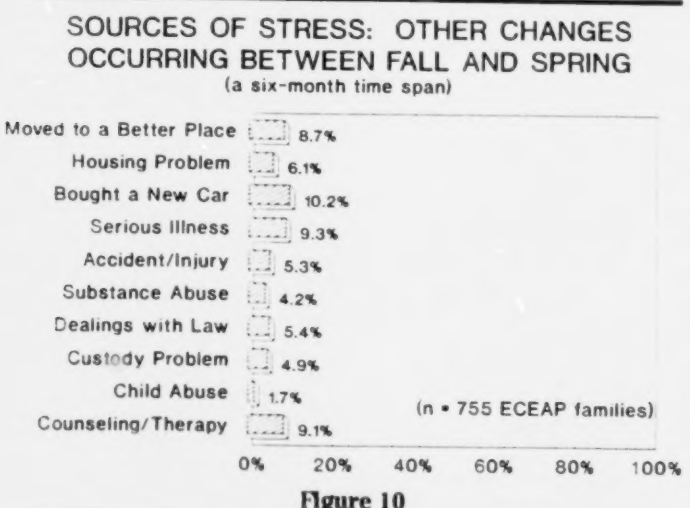
SOURCES OF STRESS: OTHER CHANGES OCCURRING BETWEEN FALL AND SPRING
(a six-month time span)
Moved to a Better Place 8.7%
Housing Problem 6.1%
Bought a New Car 10.2%
Serious Illness 9.3%
Accident/Injury 5.3%
Substance Abuse 4.2%
Dealings with Law 5.4%
Custody Problem 4.9%
Child Abuse 1.7%
Counseling/Therapy 9.1%
(n = 755 ECEAP families)
0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Figure 10

stress. Figures 8 through 10 display the percentages of ECEAP families experiencing these and other significant events during their enrollment in ECEAP, generally a six-month period of time. These data provide some insight regarding the family environment, which may impact a child's development.

The proportions of ECEAP families who experienced family changes—marital status and family size, particularly—during their participation in the program are shown in Figure 8. Figure 9 displays the percentages of ECEAP families who experienced changes in their financial situation. The extent to which ECEAP families experienced other types of changes that can produce family stress is illustrated in Figure 10. Whether ECEAP families are experiencing these types of significant events to a greater or lesser extent than other families during a six-month time span will be explored through comparison with a control group in subsequent years of the ECEAP Longitudinal Study.

Stress can be involved in many families' day-to-day arrangements and experiences, as well, particularly those related to work and school. Among families participating in the ECEAP Longitudinal Study, nearly 28 percent of ECEAP mothers and nearly 43 percent of ECEAP fathers were working outside their homes in the fall. At that time, nearly 17 percent of ECEAP mothers and seven percent of ECEAP fathers were enrolled in schools or training programs. Similar percentages of ECEAP mothers and fathers indicated they were working or involved in education programs in the spring.

Attrition from the Program

Slightly over 15 percent of the ECEAP children and families participating between 1988 and 1991 (11,267) left the program before the end of the program year. Most frequently, families moved to another community or state. To a much lesser extent, families transferred their children to another, often more specialized, program, or left because of personal reasons or family changes. In almost all cases, vacancies created by early exits were filled with new enrollees.

Highlights of the 1990–91 Program Year

Expansion of ECEAP Services. During the 1990 Legislative Session, the Governor and Legislature supported continued expansion of ECEAP, with an additional $3 million appropriated to enable the expansion of ECEAP services to all counties in Washington State. New funds enabled ECEAP to add approximately 960 new service slots and five new contractors.

Parent Involvement. Parent involvement forms the cornerstone of ECEAP, for as educators and parents both know, a child's primary learning does not take place in the classroom but within the context of the family and home.

Parent involvement, as it was envisioned six years ago, has evolved considerably since those early days. Parents themselves are shaping the way in which they are involved in their children's education, from working in the classroom to working in the community and through the political process.

Through the efforts of ECEAP parent Melba Barger, an exciting new concept in parent involvement is being put to work in Snohomish County. The "Parent Facilitation Project" places a well-trained parent volunteer—the facilitator—into each ECEAP classroom to guide other parents in not just volunteering in the classroom, but also working in the community on behalf of children and families.

In order to provide parent volunteers with well-rounded training, the facilitators themselves must become savvy in many different levels of involvement. They develop skills in working with children, serving as a listening ear to parents, and learn how to work with school districts to assure ECEAP children experience a smooth transition into the public school system. They also learn how to become effective representatives for their families, neighborhoods and schools, as well as how to get appointed to committees and boards in their communities so their voice as parents will have even broader say.

> *"Home visits and volunteering helped us the most because it let me be involved with [my daughter's] education and kept me informed about what she was doing."*
>
> —ECEAP parent

One particularly positive outgrowth of this project is the role it plays in providing opportunities for career development and skill training for facilitator parents. The project is a prime example of a win-win scenario: teachers receive support in the classrooms that enables them to better do their jobs; children receive more individual attention as a result of more volunteers

being available in the classroom; parents receive peer guidance and support; facilitators develop career paths for themselves and make important connections in the community; the public schools welcome children who are prepared for the school experience and success; and the community is strengthened as a result of everyone's empowerment and involvement.

Statewide Parent Meeting. The first statewide ECEAP parents' meeting took place in 1991, with one parent representative from each program attending. The purpose of the meeting was to provide a forum for parents to express their needs and visions for ECEAP's future.

Parents' praise for ECEAP was unanimous. One parent summed it up best when she said, "We all blossom through ECEAP—we're all moving forward." Parents agreed, though, that many challenges must be faced. They spoke of the need to strengthen multicultural education, to increase resources and educational events. At the top of their collective list, parents also listed the need for enhanced environmental education, with children provided more opportunities for understanding the importance of preserving the earth's natural resources. Access to and knowledge of community resources must be strengthened, too, parents noted. They agreed that this is especially true in the area of mental health. Information provided by the parents was incorporated into ECEAP's strategic plan for the 1991–93 Biennium.

> *"...this is the one program that not only cares about the needs of the child, but also [those] of the entire family."*
>
> —ECEAP parent

Locally Appropriate Service Delivery. The philosophy of the Department of Community Development has encouraged this community-driven approach, and provided the springboard for a pilot project that was developed and tested through six ECEAP contractors between 1989 and 1991. The "Area Agency Pilot Project" brought ECEAP contractors and state administrators together to design a new system of funding and service delivery based on collaboration rather than the old model of competition.

The intention of the project was to eliminate the need for competitive bidding for state funding as well as competition for service delivery at the local level. Community agencies and organizations were encouraged to work together to design systems to meet the broadest array of local needs and eliminate or minimize duplication of services. Key community players came together to create appropriate, responsive, cost-effective services.

The success of the pilot project has prompted local contractors and the Department to use this collaborative system of service design and delivery for all ECEAP contractors across the state. ECEAP contractors are expected to serve as leaders in the early childhood education community to bring resources together to assure families are well served on many levels. The result is cost savings for the state and local agencies, and a broader network of support for families.

One excellent example of this type of collaboration took place last year in Yakima. Historically, the various agencies serving families in the Yakima Valley area had been at

odds with one another regarding not just service delivery, but in competing for funding. Lack of coordination had resulted in misunderstandings, duplication of services, and fraying of resources.

In 1991, the Department of Community Development facilitated joint meetings with the agencies serving families in the Yakima area. By laying their issues on the table, consensus was gradually reached over the course of several months, and a joint decision reached to develop the Early Childhood Services Steering Committee, made up of representatives from each of the four Yakima County ECEAP contractors, the county government, the community college, the Department of Social and Health Services, a mental health agency, private childcare providers, the educational service district, and the area's Interagency Coordinating Council. A subcommittee comprised of the ECEAP representatives makes recommendations regarding ECEAP service delivery in the area to the larger committee, which then reaches agreement about an appropriate plan of action. Through the efforts of the steering committee, information is now shared and efforts coordinated between agencies, duplication of services no longer exists, and resources are shared and split equitably. The result: more families served with more services.

Challenges Ahead

Growing Poverty. ECEAP is making tremendous strides toward realizing the goal of preparing children for school, but much remains to be done. Census figures cast an ominous shadow on the future, and it is clear that programs like ECEAP will be increasingly vital and in demand.

The Children's Defense Fund, basing their figures on 1990 Census numbers, has estimated the number of children living in poverty to total more than 13 million across the nation. Almost one million of those slid into poverty within just the last 12 months. Washington's current dropout rate is over 23 percent—almost one in every four students. Clearly, we have not kept pace with the diverse learning styles and needs of our children.

> *"I would like to see everyone's kid here."*
>
> —ECEAP parent

Getting young students off to a good start with comprehensive early childhood education is a first step in turning these figures around. It is a less expensive alternative than "retrieval" programs that attempt to recapture students *after* they have experienced failure and dropped out of school.

Expanding Service to All Eligible Children. In tandem with the federal Head Start program, ECEAP will be able to step up to the next challenge of providing services to all eligible children by the end of the 1991–93 Biennium. This is possible due to the leadership and support of the Governor and Legislature, who authorized expanded funding for ECEAP in the 1991 Legislative Session. This expansion will assure the additional 2,000 eligible children in Washington receive comprehensive preschool services by the 1992–93 Program Year.

The challenge comes in expanding services at a time when local resources are shrinking. Current ECEAP contractors are finding it increasingly difficult to expand services

> *"The transportation was great. I don't drive, so I'm thankful [the ECEAP staff] could come get me to participate in the classroom."*
>
> —ECEAP parent

due to facility shortages, transportation cost increases, and labor pool shortages. Local school districts, always strong supporters of ECEAP, are more often unable to provide school district space for preschool programs due to expanding school enrollment. School district transportation is also increasingly difficult to access. Identifying qualified teaching staff in some communities will continue to be difficult as programs expand. Finally, local in-kind support will not be as readily available. While communities welcome local ECEAPs, health care providers, local business, and local governments will find it more difficult to maintain the same level of in-kind support as the number of children served expands.

Additionally, as the number of children who can easily be served by traditional methods are enrolled, we find that those remaining to be served need more or different services. They are the rural-remote, special needs, and/or multiple or severe needs families. This is occurring at the same time local resources are diminishing.

Finally, some ECEAPs are also finding a larger number of eligible children among the working poor and students. These families need full-day child care and are unable to enroll their children in half-day programs, given the scheduling and transportation problems that occur.

To overcome these challenges, ECEAP will look to new and innovative program designs. Already, several contractors are expanding services through partnerships with local child care providers. ECEAPs import comprehensive services into a child care center, paying less in facility costs. Income-eligible families with preschool children receive the same comprehensive services that they would receive in a more traditional model of ECEAP, but also receive wrap-around child care.

ECEAP's Effectiveness

How effectively is ECEAP serving Washington's children and families? The Washington State Legislature, when forming ECEAP, included a mandate for the evaluation of ECEAP's success in meeting the needs of the children and families being served. The next section describes the ECEAP Longitudinal Study design in more detail. Results of the evaluation to date are highlighted in the final four chapters of this report.

Measuring the Outcomes of ECEAP Participation: The Longitudinal Study Design

In response to a legislative mandate, ECEAP is conducting a longitudinal study to measure the outcomes of the state's investment in a family-focused, comprehensive preschool program. *The following sections highlight findings from the first three years of the ECEAP Longitudinal Study and focus on the immediate outcomes of ECEAP participation. The findings reported here are described in more detail in the ECEAP Longitudinal Study Year 3 Technical Report, which is available through the Department of Community Development.*

Collaboration in Design and Implementation

The Washington State Department of Community Development, ECEAP's administering agency, has contracted with the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory of Portland, Oregon, to conduct the Longitudinal Study. The design and implementation plan were developed in cooperation with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Data for the study are collected each year by local ECEAP providers with assistance from school districts and schools.

The commitment of local ECEAP staff, and the cooperation of school administrators and teachers, continue to be key in tracking the study children and families from year to year. Although more purely objective data might be obtained if data were collected by professional researchers unfamiliar to study families, the relationships ECEAP staff established with these families during their participation in ECEAP have, in many cases, facilitated a more comfortable situation in which families have been willing to share their personal feelings and experiences, and to continue participating in the study after exiting ECEAP.

Overall Structure of the Study

To encompass the full scope of ECEAP's comprehensive range of services for children and their families, the ECEAP Longitudinal Study design includes child, family, program, and community variables. Some of these variables attempt to account for individual differences in children's development over time. Other variables address ECEAP's impact on families' abilities to support and enhance their children's development.

The legislative mandate for this study of ECEAP specifies that the study include a longitudinal examination of ECEAP children and a comparison of ECEAP children to a control sample of peers who did not participate in a comprehensive preschool program. These two aspects of the study design are described next.

A Longitudinal Examination. ECEAP children and families are tracked during their ECEAP year and through their early elementary years so that both immediate

and long-range effects of ECEAP participation can be examined. This aspect of the longitudinal study seeks to answer the following questions:

- How well is ECEAP preparing children for success in school, i.e., what gains do ECEAP children make in their cognitive, motor, behavioral, and social development?
- How well is ECEAP preparing families to participate in and support their children's educational experience?
- Do the effects of ECEAP participation last?

To answer these questions, a sample of 1,355 ECEAP children and their families is being examined at the beginning and end of their preschool year and then annually in the spring from kindergarten through fourth grade. In addition to providing information on how intervention effects change over time, annual contact will help minimize attrition from the study.

> *"ECEAP staff...have truly given support, advice, encouragement, and counseling."*
>
> —ECEAP parent

The fall and spring measures during the ECEAP year, together with the follow-up measures used for tracking through the early elementary years, encompass a broad definition of competence predictive of school performance. Cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes are measured through cognitive assessments, parent interviews, teacher ratings of observable behaviors and family participation, and child health records. Children are tracked through the spring of grade four so that statewide achievement tests administered at that point enable further comparison of the sampled children to the broader population of Washington's children.

The Comparison. This component of the ECEAP Longitudinal Study, which began with the recruitment of a control sample in the fall of 1991 (Year 4 of the study), will examine how well ECEAP children and families progress through their early elementary years in the public school system *relative to a control group of peers.* The questions to be answered by the comparison include:

- Are ECEAP children more prepared for success in school than their peers, i.e., are ECEAP children more advanced at the start of school than their peers in terms of cognitive, motor, behavioral, and social development?
- Do families of ECEAP children participate in and support their children's educational experience more than families of control children?
- Do the differences last?

To answer these questions, a group of 450 children and families who match ECEAP children and families in terms of income eligibility, sex, ethnicity, language, and geographical location, but who did not participate in any preschool program, are being recruited for the control sample and will be tracked with the ECEAP study sample through fourth grade.

Where We Are in the Study

The study began in the fall of 1988 when the first of three "waves" of study children enrolled in ECEAP. It will end in the spring of 1996 when the last of the three "waves" of study children complete fourth grade. All 1,355 of the study children have completed their ECEAP year and are currently enrolled in kindergarten, first grade, or second grade, depending on the year of their recruitment. This report highlights study results from Years 1, 2, and 3—the period when study children and families participated in ECEAP.

Relation to Other Research

Other research studies comparing children from low-income families who attended comprehensive preschool programs (e.g., Perry Preschool, Appalachia Educational Laboratory's HOPE, and the Gray Early Training Project), to statistically similar children who did not, reveal that preschool experiences substantially increase the likelihood of success in later schooling through high school. Preschool "graduates" indicate lasting effects in school performance, rates of continuing education, teenage pregnancies, and crime. For instance:

- Thirty-eight percent of Perry preschool graduates went on to some form of post-secondary education, either academic or vocational, against only 21 percent of the no-preschool population.
- In constant 1981 dollars, the average cost of putting a Perry project preschool child through grades K-12 was $34,813. Putting a no-preschool child through the same school cost $41,895—an overrun of $7,082 per no-preschool child—almost all of which was spent on some form of corrective education.
- The Gray Early Training Project showed that no-preschool children were twice as likely to drop out of school (43 percent versus 22 percent).
- Participants in the Perry project showed a 64 per 100 pregnancy and live-birth rate for teenage girls who had gone to preschool. This compares with a 117 per 100 rate for those who had not. (These figures include multiple births.)
- Perry preschool graduates had more members per capita with no criminal offenses (69 percent versus 49 percent) and the preschool graduates had fewer members with five or more criminal offenses (7 percent versus 17 percent).

> *"[ECEAP] brought perspective on child development to [my spouse]. After three other kids, [my spouse] has finally seen how important it is to interact with a child and participate in their education."*
>
> —ECEAP parent

Although the primary purpose of the ECEAP Longitudinal Study is to measure Washington State's return on its investment in early childhood education, the study may also contribute new and valuable insights to our current understanding of the benefits of a comprehensive preschool experience. The ECEAP study is designed to

do more than validate what other research studies have found, that early intervention provides many lasting benefits for children. It seeks to reveal a broader set of positive outcomes for both children and families and to identify areas in ECEAP that need more emphasis or improvement. The scope of this study—both the large number of children and families it tracks and the variety of outcomes it seeks to measure—is indeed unique.

Study Shows ECEAP Children and Families Are Gaining

Results to date from the ECEAP Longitudinal Study indicate that ECEAP children and families are gaining in desired program outcomes. Overall, ECEAP appears to be having a strong, positive impact on children's growth and development in many areas, including cognitive skills, physical abilities, social and emotional well-being, health, and nutrition. There are also indications of positive ECEAP impact on families, though the impact on this larger, less directly served group is not yet seen to be as strong as the impact on children. In the next few years, comparison of ECEAP participants' progress to the progress of other children and families who did not participate in ECEAP or another comprehensive preschool program will elucidate the extent to which these gains may be attributable to ECEAP.

> *"The [ECEAP staff] are to be commended on the outstanding job they perform with love and a fierce dedication to improving the lives of our children. Many thanks!"*
>
> —ECEAP parent

The next four sections of this report present significant findings regarding the immediate outcomes of ECEAP participation. Study results are organized in four general areas:

- Child Cognitive and Physical Development Outcomes
- Child Social and Emotional Well-Being Outcomes
- Child Health and Nutrition Outcomes
- Family Well-Being and Empowerment Outcomes

Child Cognitive and Physical Development Outcomes

ECEAP's focus on developmentally appropriate education provides children with extensive opportunity and support for their mental and physical development. ECEAP providers make specific efforts to:

- enhance each child's cognitive processes and skills with particular attention to conceptual and communication skills, including appropriate steps to correct current developmental problems; and
- enhance each child's health and physical abilities, including appropriate steps to correct current physical problems.

To measure ECEAP's success in meeting these goals, four study variables were selected to examine changes made by children during their participation in the program. A description of these variables, the individual items comprising each variable, and the instruments used to collect the data are provided in the sidebar on Page 18.

Significant Findings

Statistically significant gains were made by ECEAP children on all four of the study variables measuring cognitive and physical development. Each gain is highlighted below (marked by ■) and notable child, family, or program characteristics that contributed to statistically significant differences in outcomes among children are described (marked by •). Additional findings related to children's cognitive and physical development follow.

■ **Children's scores on the *language* section of the DIAL-R increased dramatically from fall to spring.**

- Significant differences seen in fall *language* scores among children in the three different program types evened out by spring, indicating that all local program designs (center-based, home-based, and locally designed) are successful in providing effective education experiences.
- Children whose fathers reported having plans to pursue more education gained significantly more on the DIAL-R *language* section than did children whose fathers didn't have such plans, contributing to a significant difference in spring scores.

■ **Children's *concepts* scores on the DIAL-R improved very significantly from fall to spring.**

- Children whose mothers were working outside the home had significantly higher *concepts* scores in the fall than children whose mothers were not working outside the home. By spring, this difference diminished.
- In the fall, children whose mothers had earned a high school diploma or general equivalency degree (GED) scored higher on *concepts* than those whose

COGNITIVE AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Study Instruments

The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R) is an individually administered, 15-20 minute, untimed test designed to measure receptive (hearing) vocabulary. Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning-Revised (DIAL-R) is an individually administered, 20-30 minute assessment of conceptual, language, and motor abilities. Items on the DIAL-R are based on school-related tasks identified as necessary for success in regular classroom settings and sample typical developmental behaviors that children can readily demonstrate.

Study Variables

Receptive vocabulary is the PPVT-R standard score, derived from the child's raw score on the PPVT-R according to age-referenced norms.

Language includes eight items from the DIAL-R:

- Articulating
- Giving personal data
- Remembering
- Naming nouns
- Naming verbs
- Classifying foods
- Problem solving
- Sentence length

Concepts includes eight items from the DIAL-R:

- Identifying body parts
- Naming colors
- Rote counting
- Meaningful counting
- Positioning
- Identifying concepts
- Naming letters
- Sorting chips

Motor includes eight items from the DIAL-R:

- Catching
- Jumping/hopping/skipping
- Building
- Touching fingers
- Cutting
- Matching
- Copying
- Writing name

mothers had completed less or more than 12 grades of education. By spring, children who were in the two lower scoring groups gained more than children whose mothers had completed high school, which evened out the differences.

- Children whose mothers reported having plans for more schooling scored significantly higher on the DIAL-R *concepts* section in the spring than children whose mothers weren't planning more schooling.

■ **Children's *receptive vocabulary*, as measured by their standard scores on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R), increased very significantly over the course of their ECEAP year.**

- Children whose parents did not expect them to complete high school scored significantly lower on the PPVT-R than did children whose parents expected them to attain more education. The highest PPVT-R standard scores at both times were those of children whose parents expected them to earn a high school degree or GED. Children expected by their parents to attain more than a high school education made the strongest gains.

- Children whose parents were consistently responsive (provided child information, met appointments, returned permission slips) had the highest PPVT-R standard scores in the spring and were by far the greatest gainers in *receptive vocabulary* over the course of the program year.

- The PPVT-R standard scores of children whose parents consistently or frequently followed through on ECEAP staff assistance with social services contacts and activities increased more from fall to spring than those of children whose parents less frequently followed through.

- **Children made highly significant gains in gross and fine motor skills, as measured by the DIAL-R *motor* section, between fall and spring.**

  - Although gross and fine motor skills improved significantly among all children, children whose fathers were working outside the home scored significantly higher on *motor* in the spring than those whose fathers were not.

Additional Findings

In the 1990–91 Program Year:

- Ninety-one percent of study parents indicated that the education and structured learning environment provided by ECEAP were "very valuable" or "valuable" for their child (based on a five-point rating scale).

- Over 86 percent of study parents rated motor skills and coordination development as a "very valuable" or "valuable" aspect of ECEAP participation for their child.

ECEAP's Attainment of Cognitive and Physical Development Goals

The cognitive and physical development seen in children during their participation in ECEAP was highly statistically significant and faster than the development of children in the national norm group (see sidebar). These study findings imply that children's cognitive and physical skills and abilities are indeed enhanced during their participation in ECEAP. ECEAP appears to be successfully enhancing children's cognitive and physical development, possibly counter-balancing the effects of poverty and family stress. More definitive findings will be possible through comparison to a control group of peers.

National Comparison

Relative to the national norm group of children of the same age, ECEAP children developed the skills and abilities measured by the DIAL-R and PPVT-R at a faster pace. A comparison can be made between ECEAP children's average performance on the DIAL-R and PPVT-R, listed below, and the national norm group's average performance at the 50th percentile in both the fall and spring.

- ECEAP children improved their performance on the DIAL-R *language* section from the 60th percentile in the fall to the 80th percentile in the spring.

- On the *concepts* section of the DIAL-R, ECEAP children moved from below average for their age group at the 44th percentile to above average at the 68th percentile by the end of the program year.

- In the fall, ECEAP children scored well below the average of the national norm group on the PPVT-R (receptive vocabulary assessment), ranking in the 23rd percentile, and although they made very significant gains during the ECEAP year, they remained below the national norm group's average in the spring, ranking in the 39th percentile. Their improvement, however, was remarkably faster than the national norm group's improvement.

- ECEAP children's fall scores on the DIAL-R *motor* section ranked them in the 40th percentile. By spring, ECEAP children had raised their performance to the 74th percentile.

"The most valuable aspect [of ECEAP for my child] has been the interaction and learning with other children."

—ECEAP parent

Significant differences in cognitive and physical development among children participating in ECEAP's three program types appear only once (*language*), and in that case, the differences disappear by spring. This indicates that all three types of programs selected by communities—center-based, home-based, and locally designed—are effective for children.

The influence of parents' education and employment status on many of the study variables related to children's cognitive and physical development indicates that ECEAP's emphasis on parents and their needs is especially important and appropriate—it benefits their children, as well as themselves. Support of parents' plans for more education, their aspirations for their children's educational attainment, and their participation in the program, clearly is important, as study findings show that these are related to the strongest gains and highest performance levels on some of the study variables. In some cases, differences among parents (e.g., mother's educational level and work status) were related to differences among their children in the fall but not in the spring, indicating that ECEAP may have compensated for those differences somewhat during the ECEAP year.

"[My daughter] has learned so much since being enrolled in ECEAP and her comprehension has gotten much better."

—ECEAP parent

In any program that serves such a diverse population as does ECEAP, differences in outcomes among ethnic and language groups are typically expected. *All* cognitive and physical development outcomes were examined by ethnicity and language to identify the existence of such differences. Furthermore, the study sample is representative of the ECEAP population with regard to these characteristics. Yet, statistically significant differences were not found in fall or spring, *suggesting* that ECEAP's education component has been effective for children regardless of their ethnicity or the primary language they speak.

Child Social and Emotional Well-Being Outcomes

Local ECEAP providers encourage the development of the social and emotional well-being of children through developmentally appropriate education and careful attention to the emotional needs of the children and their families. Providers particularly attempt to:

- establish patterns and expectations of success for each child, which will create a climate of confidence for present and future learning and development; and
- encourage each child's self-confidence, spontaneity, curiosity, and self-discipline.

To examine the extent to which the ECEAP experience meets these goals for children, 10 study variables were selected to measure changes during the ECEAP year. These variables, the items comprising each variable, and the instruments used to collect the data are listed in the sidebar on Page 22.

Significant Findings

Social and emotional well-being outcomes are reflected in the statistically significant gains made by children during the course of their time in ECEAP. Gains made on each variable are described below (marked by ■) and notable child, family, or ECEAP characteristics that significantly influenced differences in gains among children are listed (marked by •). Additional findings, related to children's social and emotional well-being, follow.

■ **Teachers observed ECEAP children to have made very significant gains in *motivation/achievement.***

- Teachers' ratings show that *motivation/achievement* increased by spring regardless of parents' level of home visit participation, although increase was highest among children whose parents demonstrated a high level of participation.
- Overall, children of every ethnicity gained in *motivation/achievement* during the program year, but pre-existing ethnic differences remain at the end of the program year.
- Significant differences emerge in children's *motivation/achievement* ratings with regard to the language they speak. Children speaking primarily Asian languages and English increased in *motivation/achievement*, while children speaking Spanish and other languages declined in *motivation/achievement*.

■ **Parents reported that children's *maturity* increased significantly from fall to spring.**

- Caucasian and Hispanic children, representing the majority of the sample, gained in *maturity*, while Asian/Pacific and Black children decreased and Native American children remained unchanged.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Study Variables

Motivation/achievement includes the following items from the behavior inventory completed by the child's teacher:

- Catches on quickly
- Likes to explore/ investigate things
- Is smart for her/his age
- Follows directions/ remembers what he/she is told to do
- Can be depended on to do what she/he is supposed to do
- Listens well
- Works carefully/does his/her best

Maturity combines these items from a behavior inventory completed by the child's parent(s):

- Can be depended on to do what she/he is supposed to do
- Obeys me
- Is smart for her/his age
- Tries not to hurt others

Insecurity combines these items from a behavior inventory completed by the child's parent(s):

- Stays close to me at home
- Runs to me with every bump
- Often complains about not feeling well
- Gets upset when I pay attention to another child

Shyness combines these items from a behavior inventory completed by the child's parent(s):

- Is shy or bashful with adults
- Clings to me in unfamiliar places

(continued on Page 23)

- **Parents reported that both *insecurity* and *shyness* decreased very significantly during the program year.**
  - Both girls and boys declined in *shyness* by spring, but girls declined significantly more than boys.
- **Teachers indicated that children's *emotional* well-being changed very significantly, that is, children expressed their emotions more strongly in spring. This may be related to the decrease in *insecurity* and *shyness*.**
- **Teachers also indicated that the *temperament/attention* of children changed very significantly. By the end of the program year, children were more expressive of their needs for attention. Again, this may be related to decreases in *insecurity* and *shyness* among children.**
  - While all children gained significantly, the same pattern of ethnic differences appeared in the fall and spring. At both times, Black and Hispanic children were more expressive of *temperament/attention* and they gained the most during the program year.
- **Parents observed very significant decreases in *difficult* behaviors and *affection/dependence* in their children by the end of the program year.**
  - Ethnicity significantly influenced differences in parents' ratings of their child's *difficult* behaviors in the fall. By spring, the ethnicity-related differences evened out.

Additional Findings

In the 1990–91 Program Year:

- Nearly 90 percent of study parents said that the interaction and friendship their child experienced with other children and adults were "very valuable" or "valuable" aspects of ECEAP (based on a five-point rating scale).

- Eighty-eight percent of study parents indicated that aspects of ECEAP that encouraged development of confidence, self-esteem, high expectations, and motivation were "very valuable" or "valuable" for their child.

- The routine and structure ECEAP provides for children was rated as "very valuable" or "valuable" by over 87 percent of study parents.

ECEAP's Attainment of Social and Emotional Well-Being Goals

The gains indicated by the social and emotional well-being variables show that ECEAP teachers and parents agree that ECEAP children indeed have become more mature, motivated, secure, outgoing, and expressive before entering kindergarten. Many of these findings may be linked to the cognitive and physical development outcomes described in the previous section. For instance, the decreases seen in insecurity and shyness may be related to the improvements in language and verbal skills.

Unlike with cognitive and physical development outcomes, ethnicity and primary language did have a significant effect on social and emotional well-being outcomes. Ethnic differences appear in both teacher and parent ratings of children's behavior, indicating that ECEAP may not be overcoming pre-existing ethnic differences or, alternatively, that teachers and parents of different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds may perceive and value behaviors differently.

While signficant changes occurred in these study variables, it is not clear that the changes accurately reflect the actual gains made by children. It is possible that parents' and teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and abilities to respond to the children's behavior changed, leading them to perceive and report greater or lesser development in variables such as maturity. More conclusive findings about children's social and emotional development will be possible through subsequent follow-up (further ratings by parents and other teachers) and comparison to a control group of peers.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

(continued from Page 22)

Emotional is comprised of these items from a behavior inventory completed by the child's teacher:

- Cries a lot
- Runs to me with every bump
- Worries a lot
- Is afraid of a lot of things
- Often complains of not feeling well
- Gets upset easily

Temperament/attention combines these items from a behavior inventory completed by the child's teacher:

- Likes to disobey/break rules
- Is restless/can't sit still
- Has a hot temper
- Has a hard time waiting
- Is easily distracted
- Gets into fights with others
- Quickly loses interest

Difficult is comprised of these items from a behavior inventory completed by the child's parents:

- Likes to disobey/break rules
- Shows anger toward me
- Whines when doesn't get her/his way
- Is calm and easy-going
- Becomes frustrated or angry with toys
- Has a hot temper
- Has a hard time waiting

Affection/dependence combines these items from a behavior inventory completed by the child's parents:

- Comes to me for comfort
- Is easily comforted
- Likes to be cuddled

"[My daughter] has shown tremendous change in her interaction with other people and has learned patience and other life skills which will benefit her greatly."

—ECEAP parent

There was less of an influence by parent characteristics and program option on social and emotional well-being outcomes than on cognitive and physical development outcomes. The one effect, that of parents' level of participation in home visits on children's level of *motivation/achievement*, implies that parent involvement and support positively benefits children's development of social and emotional well-being.

"Since [my son] is an only child, ECEAP has been great for him to learn to interact with other adults and children. He's had to learn to not always be first and to go by the rules. And that reinforces what I've tried to teach him."

—ECEAP parent

Child Health and Nutrition Outcomes

With health care costs on the rise, investment in early prevention, identification, and treatment of children's health and developmental problems provide great payoff. Through the health component of ECEAP's comprehensive program model, ECEAP providers specifically aim to:

- enhance each child's health and physical abilities, including taking appropriate steps to correct current physical problems; and
- enhance each child's access to an adequate diet, as well as enhance the family's attitude toward sound nutritional practices.

To gauge if ECEAP is attaining these goals, ECEAP staff gathered information from each child's health file, provided their perceptions about ECEAP's role in treating any problems, and interviewed parents about the identification and treatment of any problems their child might have. Parents also offered their perception of ECEAP's role and their own role in addressing any health problems. Data from these study activities indicate that children and families made health- and nutrition-related gains over the course of their participation in ECEAP. The section describing these gains is preceded by a section profiling the health status of ECEAP children and a section describing ECEAP's role in addressing ECEAP children's health and developmental problems. All findings reported in this section are for study children who participated in ECEAP during the 1990–91 Program Year.

Health Profile of ECEAP Children

Figure 11 displays the percentages of ECEAP children reported by ECEAP staff as having particular types of health or developmental problems. Dental problems were most frequently cited—over 20 percent of ECEAP children needed dental care at the time they enrolled in ECEAP or during their time in the program. Other health problems were related to vision and hearing (each was reported in over six percent of the children); weight and allergies (each was reported in nearly six percent); nutrition (seen in over four percent); height (seen in less than one percent); and other medical areas (reported in nearly 10 percent). ECEAP staff reported that over 11 percent of the children had speech problems and 10 percent had behavioral problems. Less than

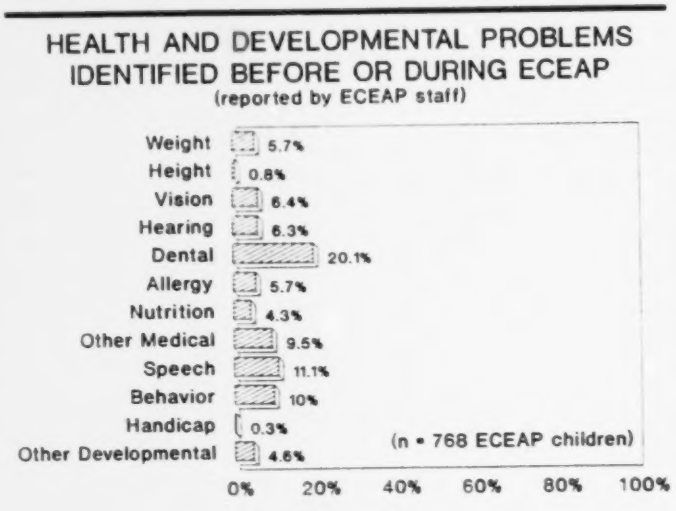

Figure 11

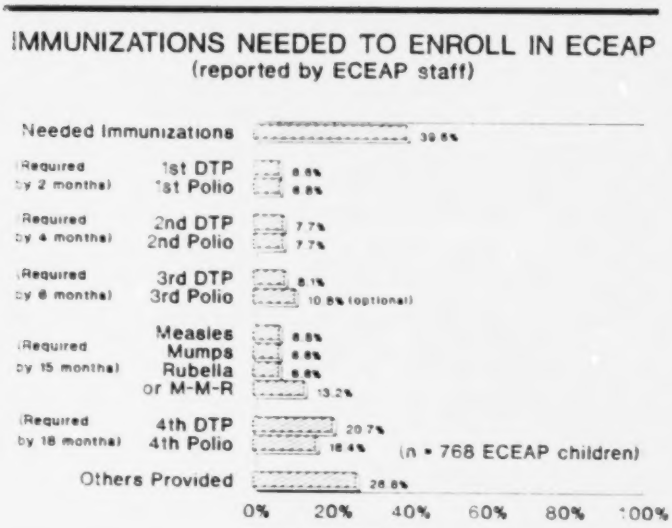

Figure 12

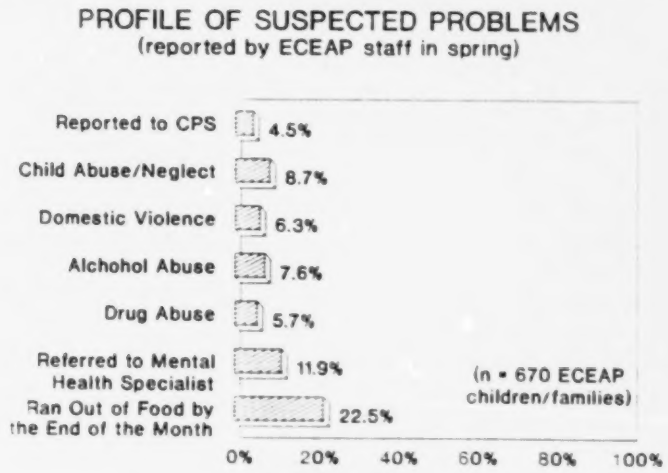

Figure 13

one-half of one percent of the children were reported to have a handicap.* Nearly five percent of the children had other developmental problems.

Nearly 40 percent of children did not have basic immunizations at the time they enrolled in ECEAP. Figure 12 shows the percentages of children not having certain immunizations at age four (when they were eligible to enroll in ECEAP) that had been required at younger ages.

Besides reporting from children's health records, ECEAP staff were asked to estimate the number of study children and families for whom they *strongly suspected* abuse or other afflicting conditions was a problem (see Figure 13). ECEAP staff strongly suspected that nearly nine percent of the study children were experiencing child abuse or neglect. Nearly eight percent of the study families were thought to be experiencing a problem with alcohol abuse, while nearly six percent were thought to be experiencing a problem with drug abuse. ECEAP staff also indicated that nearly 12 percent of the study children were referred to a mental health specialist during their participation in ECEAP.

As shown in Figure 13, ECEAP staff strongly suspected that nearly 23 percent of the study families ran out of food by the end of the month. This is consistent with the fact that 22 percent of families reported some lack in the adequacy of food they have for two meals a day. While three out of four families rated the food they have for two meals a day as "almost always adequate," nearly 16 percent said their food is only "usually adequate," almost four percent said it is "sometimes adequate," just over one percent said it is "seldom adequate," and one percent said it is "not at all adequate."

* The term "disability" is preferable, but in reporting these study data and findings, "handicap" must be used since this was the response provided on the parent interview instrument used during the early years of the study. The parent interview form has since been modified.

Overall, the health and developmental problems that a notable proportion of ECEAP children have, and the afflicting conditions a notable proportion of ECEAP children and families are experiencing, indicate that there are significant needs to be met by ECEAP's health and social services components.

ECEAP's Role in Addressing Health and Developmental Problems

ECEAP's health and social services components focus on enhancing children's and families' health and nutrition status and their ability to access services they need. One major part of this enhancement focus emphasizes prevention of future problems through immunizations, sound nutritional and hygiene habits, and health and safety education. The direct benefits of preventive investments during early childhood are almost without parallel. For example, national statistics show that for every dollar invested in immunizations, $11 are saved in corrective health care costs. This statistic is notable considering nearly 40 percent of ECEAP children do not have basic immunizations when they enter the program. In addition, the safety education provided by ECEAP may prevent many accidents from happening. Accidents are the leading cause of death among children in Washington State.

ECEAP'S ROLE IN TREATING HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL PROBLEMS

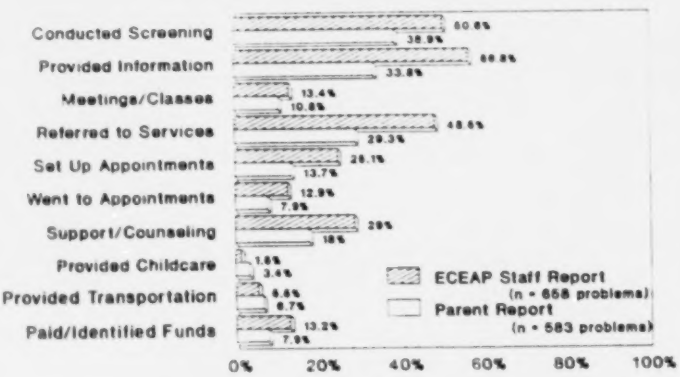

Figure 14

Another major part of the enhancement focus involves identifying and treating the problems children and families bring with them into the program or develop while they are participating in the program. Figure 14 illustrates the array of roles ECEAP assumes in addressing children's health and developmental problems.

Differences emerged between the perspectives of ECEAP staff and parents. ECEAP staff generally report filling these roles to a greater extent than parents perceived. However, ECEAP staff and parents *agree* that ECEAP's largest roles in addressing children's health and developmental problems include screening for problems, providing information, referring families to services, offering support and counseling, and setting up appointments.

To address 13 percent of the reported problems, ECEAP staff said they identified funds (donations or public or private assistance support) or paid (with dollars of last resort) for treatment. Similar percentages of staff said they provided relevant meetings or classes, or went to appointments with the family. Lower percentages of staff indicated that ECEAP staff provided transportation or childcare to increase access to treatment or classes.

Parents were asked about their own role in addressing their child's health and developmental problems. Figure 15 shows that arranging appointments, seeking and reading information about the problem, and providing transportation were the most frequently cited roles assumed by parents. Nearly one-fourth of the parents reported that they paid or identified funds for treatment, slightly fewer indicated that they identified needed services, and one-fifth said they administered medication to their child. Slightly more than 10 percent reported that they attended meetings or classes.

PARENTS' ROLE IN TREATING HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL PROBLEMS

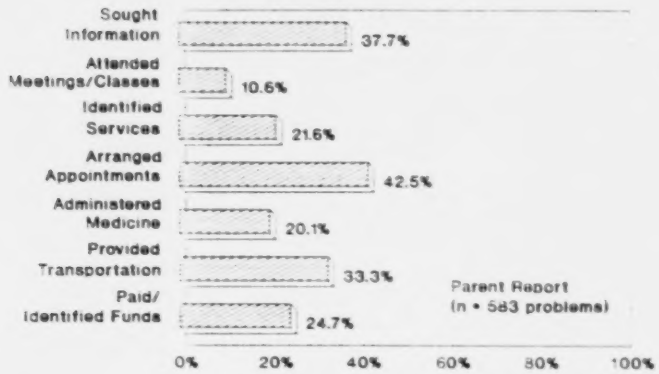

Figure 15

ECEAP staff referred slightly more than 13 percent of the study children, because of health or developmental concerns, to the school districts they would be attending as kindergarteners. Broken down into smaller categories, nearly seven percent of the study children were referred because of speech-related concerns, five percent because of behavior concerns, and five percent because of health or medical concerns. More than two percent of the study children were referred because of limited English skills and the same percentage was referred because of concerns about their cognitive skills. Fewer than two percent of study children were referred because of concerns regarding their language development, fine motor skills, or gross motor skills.

Enhancement of Children's Health and Nutrition Status

Gains experienced by children (and families) related to their health and nutrition status were very positive. Highlights in areas not mentioned already include:

- Parents' ratings of the adequacy of their health resources (medical and dental care) improved "very significantly" from fall to spring.
- When asked in the spring to rate how various health-related items had changed during the previous six months, nearly one out of two parents indicated that their child's hygiene habits, such as brushing teeth and washing hands, had become "much better" or "better." ECEAP's emphasis on good hygiene was rated as "very valuable" or "valuable" for children by over 87 percent of parents (based on a five-point rating scale).
- One in four parents noted improvement in their child's health and in their own knowledge of their child's health.
- Nearly 40 percent of parents said their child's eating habits (i.e., their willingness to eat nutritious foods and try new things) had gotten "much better" or "better" during the time they were enrolled in ECEAP.

- One in three parents indicated in the spring that their knowledge of good nutrition and their ability to provide well-balanced meals had improved during the previous six months.
- Nutrition, overall, was rated as "much better" or "better" than it had been six months earlier by 28 percent of parents.

> *"[One of the most valuable aspects of ECEAP was] having [my child's] speech problems discovered and treated."*
>
> —ECEAP parent

- Ninety-two percent of parents indicated that learning about safety through ECEAP was "very valuable" or "valuable" for their child. This is especially important given that injuries and accidents account for two out of five deaths among children ages one to four.
- Ninety percent of parents indicated that meals and snacks provided by ECEAP were "very valuable" or "valuable" for their child. Eighty-six percent said that receiving nutrition information was "very valuable" or "valuable" for their family.

ECEAP's Attainment of Health and Nutrition Goals

Through the ECEAP Longitudinal Study, a health profile of ECEAP children is now available. Of a sample of 768 study children, 56 percent had health or developmental problems which may have impaired future learning and development. It is clear that, while ECEAP cannot claim all of these problems were remedied, the comprehensive program model enables early evaluation and identification of problems which can then be addressed without further delay or interruption in a child's growth and development.

ECEAP clearly has a significant role in early intervention and remediation of problems identified before or during the ECEAP year. Parents report that approximately 40 percent of health and developmental problems were identified by ECEAP staff. ECEAP's role in addressing problems, from the parents' point of view, ranged from referring parents to available services (29 percent of cases) to setting up appointments (14 percent), providing transportation (7 percent), accompanying parents (8 percent), and paying or identifying funds for services (8 percent). ECEAP staff generally report higher percentages for each of these roles, as shown in Figure 14. The variety of ways in which staff and parents indicate ECEAP assists with identified problems shows that ECEAP's locally driven model provides the flexibility needed to address children's unique health and developmental needs within the context of available community resources.

In addition, parents report that significant, positive changes occurred in their child's health status, the adequacy of their family's health resources, their child's hygiene, the family's knowledge of good health and nutrition, and their child's knowledge of safety. These reports indicate that ECEAP's efforts at prevention education are successful and perceived as valuable by parents.

Family Well-Being and Empowerment Outcomes

Family well-being and empowerment are encouraged through ECEAP's parent involvement and social services components. Parents have opportunities to volunteer in their child's classroom, advise local program decision making, and participate in training and education workshops and support groups. Family needs assessments conducted upon enrollment in the program and home visits throughout the year enable ECEAP staff to link families to the community resources and services they need and to develop training and education opportunities that are responsive to local needs.

Through these activities, ECEAP providers strive particularly to:

- empower families to develop improved parenting skills, increased knowledge of and access to appropriate resources, greater advocacy for children's needs, and increased self-sufficiency;
- enhance the ability of each child and family to relate to each other and others; and
- enhance dignity and self-worth within each child and family.

To measure ECEAP's success in meeting these goals, 14 study variables were selected to examine changes made by families during their participation in ECEAP. The two variables that changed significantly, the individual items comprising each variable, and the instruments used to collect the data are described in the sidebar to the right.

FAMILY WELL-BEING AND EMPOWERMENT OUTCOMES

Study Variables

Basic resources **combines these items from a family resource scale completed by the child's parent(s):**

- **Food**
- **Housing**
- **Furnishings**
- **Clothing**
- **Heat**
- **Plumbing**
- **Transportation**
- **Telephone**
- **Toys**

Money **combines these items from the family resource scale completed by the child's parent(s):**

- **Money for bills**
- **Money for self**
- **Money for entertainment**
- **Source of loans**

Note: Descriptions of the twelve other family-related study variables that did not change significantly can be found in the ECEAP Longitudinal Study Year 3 Technical Report.

Significant Findings

Two study variables addressing the first goal (particularly access to appropriate resources and self-sufficiency) increased significantly during the program year. These are highlighted below (marked by ■) and notable child, family, or program characteristics that contributed to statistically significant differences among children are described (marked by •). With regard to the second and third family-related goals, insignificant changes occurred on the study variables from fall to spring. Many of the ad-

ditional findings described in the following, however, indicate positive outcomes in these areas.

- **The adequacy of *basic resources*, as rated by parents, improved very significantly from fall to spring.**
  - Parents who were rated by ECEAP staff as highly responsive (i.e., they consistently provided information, met appointments, and returned permission slips) gained by far the most on their assessment of their *basic resources* during the course of their family's enrollment in ECEAP.
- **Parents' ratings of the adequacy of *money* increased significantly by the end of the program year.**
  - In the fall, significant differences in parents' ratings of the adequacy of *money* appeared among the different language groups. Ratings improved among all language groups, especially among Asian language-speaking parents, which diminished the effect of language differences to insignificance by spring.

Adequacy of Family Resources

Figure 16 displays parents' ratings of the adequacy of several resources. In the figure, the resources are in order from highest to lowest percentage of parents indicating that the resources were "almost always" or "usually" adequate. The least adequate resources had by ECEAP families, as rated by ECEAP parents, included daycare and babysitting, money for bills, transportation, dental care, and medical care. Specifically:

- In the fall, one out of four children attended daycare at least once a week. In the spring, one out of three children were attending daycare that frequently. Figure 16 shows that over 46 percent of the ECEAP parents in the fall said that daycare or babysitting arrangements were only "sometimes" adequate, "seldom" adequate, or "not at all" adequate. Parents' ratings improved by spring, when the percentage of parents who rated daycare or babysitting as less than "usually" or "almost always" adequate decreased to 41 percent.
- Parents' ratings of the money they have to pay bills improved from fall to spring. In the fall, as Figure 16 illustrates, nearly 40 percent of families felt the money they had for bills was less than "usually" or "almost always" adequate, i.e., they were "sometimes," "seldom," or "not at all" adequate. In the spring, the percentage of families rating their money for bills as less than "usually" or "almost always" adequate decreased to 35 percent.

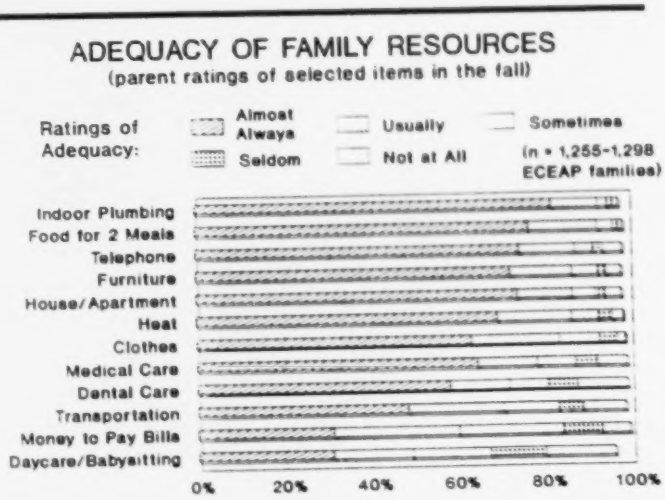

Figure 16

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- Twenty-eight percent of parents in the fall rated their transportation as only "sometimes," "seldom," or "not at all" adequate. Spring ratings improved slightly, when one-fourth of parents rated their transportation as less than "usually" or "almost always" adequate.

- The biggest improvement in parents' ratings of resources was seen in ratings of dental care. In the fall, 27 percent of parents said their dental care resources were only "sometimes," "seldom," or "not at all" adequate for their families. By spring, this percentage fell by over eight percent.

- Medical care resources were rated as less than "usually" or "almost always" adequate by 21 percent of parents in the fall. This percentage decreased to 15 percent of parents in the spring.

Utilization of Social Services

With regard to social services utilization, ECEAP staff assist families in two ways: ECEAP staff help families access services they need and they help families become independent from services they no longer need. Significant findings related to the percentages of families who changed their status from using to not using particular services, or vice versa, are described below. The resulting increases or decreases in the overall percentages of families utilizing those services are displayed in Figures 17 and 18 and are included in the descriptions of findings.

- Seventy-two percent of parents indicated that receiving information about community resources and social services was a "very valuable" or "valuable" aspect of their family's participation in ECEAP. Access to these resources and services through ECEAP was rated as "very valuable" or "valuable" by 68 percent of parents.

- Twenty-two percent of all study families reported changing from using AFDC services in the fall to not using AFDC services by the spring. Overall use of AFDC assistance did not increase much over the course of the year, moving from 51.7 percent to 52.1 percent of families (see Figure 17).

INCREASED UTILIZATION OF SERVICES
(reported by parents in fall and spring)

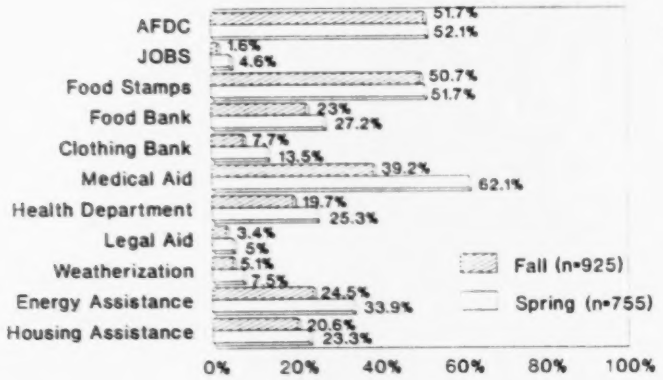

Figure 17

- JOBS participation increased from 1.6 percent of study families in the fall to 4.6 percent in the spring (shown in Figure 17).

- Participation in FIP decreased among study families, from 13.5 percent of families in the fall to 10.6 percent of families in the spring (see Figure 18).

- Fourteen percent of all study families reported changing from using WIC in the fall to not using WIC by the spring. Overall, the percentage of families using WIC assistance decreased slightly from 22.4 percent in the fall to 21.2 percent in the spring (shown in Figure 18).

- Twenty percent of all study families reported changing from using food stamps in the fall to not using them by the spring, while 12 percent reported the reverse, that they had not used food stamps in the fall but were using them in the spring. Figure 17 shows that the percentage of families using a food bank increased by the end of the year from 23 percent to 27.2 percent.

- Overall, the percentage of families accessing medical aid increased from 39.2 percent in the fall to 62.1 percent in the spring (see Figure 17). Families using Department of Health services increased also, from 19.7 percent to 25.3 percent by the end of the year.

DECREASED UTILIZATION OF SERVICES
(reported by parents in fall and spring)

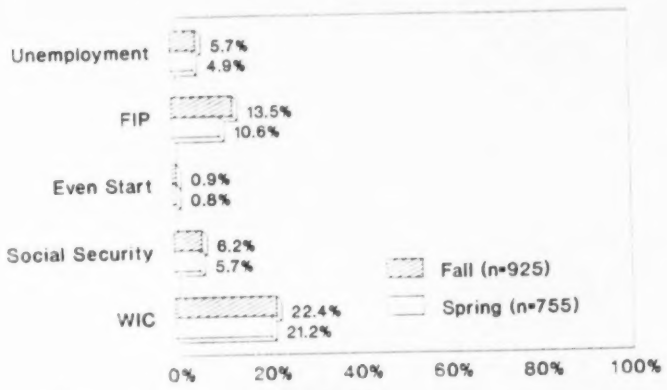

Figure 18

SUPPORT GROUP/ORGANIZATION PARTICIPATION
(reported by parents in fall and spring)

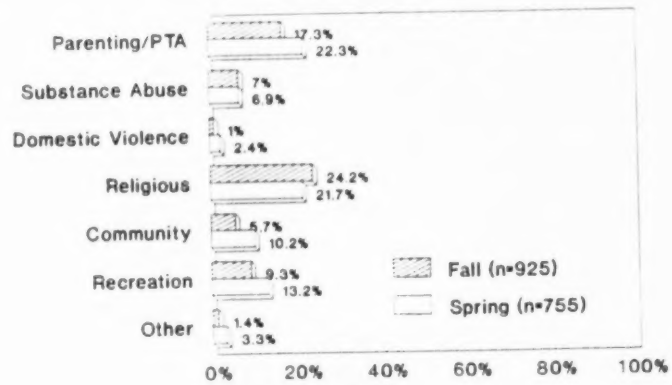

Figure 19

- The percentage of study families accessing a clothing bank increased from 7.7 percent to 13.5 percent by spring (shown in Figure 17).

Participation in Support Groups and Organizations

In the spring, higher percentages of study families reported participating in parenting groups/PTA, community organizations, recreation, and domestic violence prevention support groups, as shown in Figure 19. At the same time, slightly lower percentages reported participating in alcohol/drug abuse prevention groups and religious organizations.

Additional Findings

In the 1990–91 Program Year:

- Nearly 84 percent of parents indicated that communicating with ECEAP staff about their child was a "very valuable" or "valuable" aspect of their participation in the program. Home visits were rated as "very valuable" or "valuable" by 70 percent of parents.
- Three out of four study parents said that a "very valuable" or "valuable" aspect of ECEAP was the time it allowed them to be alone, to have a break without worrying about their child. Seventy-one percent of parents found the routine and schedule of ECEAP participation to be "very valuable" or "valuable" for their family.
- Seventy-three percent of study parents found the orientation to school provided by ECEAP was "very valuable" or "valuable" for their family.

ECEAP's Attainment of Family Well-Being and Empowerment Goals

Overall, ECEAP's impact on families is not yet seen to be as strong as its impact on children. However, there are already indications of positive ECEAP impact on this larger, less directly served group. For instance, ECEAP parent reports show improvements in the adequacy of several family resources, increased utilization of many social services, and increased participation in a variety of support groups and organizations. The outcomes ECEAP seeks to achieve with families, which include these and other less observable outcomes related to empowerment and well-being, are subject to a broad range of influences outside the program's content and process, and significant changes in families may manifest themselves only over a longer period of time.

> *"Since I was a volunteer parent and was involved in [ECEAP], they hired me as a staff person at my daughter's school. I thank [the ECEAP staff] for that."*
>
> —ECEAP parent

Very signficant improvements in the adequacy of families' *basic resources* and significant improvement in families' *money*, as rated by parents, occurred during study families' participation in ECEAP. These two study variables are comprised of parents' ratings of resources such as housing, food, money to pay bills, transportation, and clothing. Positive changes in their ratings may reflect actual improvement in *basic resources* and *money* or improvement in parents' ability to manage these resources. Regardless, ECEAP families appear to be securing more adequate resources.

None of the other study variables related to family well-being and empowerment changed significantly from fall to spring. This is not surprising, as some of these variables measured parents' perceptions about the adequacy of less tangible resources such as having someone there for support, having time for oneself, and having time together as a family. Other study variables measured parents' perceptions about their personal well-being and their feelings about parenting. Significant changes in these

variables, which are more difficult to observe than tangibles, may appear through further follow-up with these parents and comparison with a control group of peers.

> *"I have grown tremendously as a direct result of my child being in this program. As a result, my whole family has benefited."*
>
> —ECEAP parent

Changes occurred in the levels of social services utilized by ECEAP families. In the spring, larger proportions of ECEAP families were utilizing services such as AFDC, food and clothing banks, energy and housing assistance, and health and medical aid. Smaller proportions of ECEAP families were utilizing unemployment assistance, FIP, Even Start, WIC, and Social Security, in the spring. Participation in parenting groups, community organizations, recreation, and domestic violence prevention support groups increased among study families, while participation decreased slightly in substance abuse prevention groups and religious organizations. The array of services and support accessed by ECEAP families is broad, as illustrated in this profile. ECEAP's family-centered, comprehensive service delivery model enables staff to facilitate families' access to social services and support organizations through collaboration with other family service agencies in their communities.

> *"I am very pleased with the ECEAP program. My only wish is that more children could be enrolled."*
>
> —ECEAP parent

What's to Come

This report has provided highlights from the first three years of the ECEAP Longitudinal Study. Study results so far have focused on the gains made by children and families while they were participating in ECEAP. Further follow-up of these children and families as they enter and proceed through elementary school, and comparison to a control group of peers during this time, will confirm the extent to which the outcomes are believed to be attributable to participation in ECEAP. ECEAP staff are currently recruiting children and families for a control group. Analyses conducted during Year 4 will focus on comparing the developmental status and progress of these children who did not participate in a comprehensive preschool program with that of ECEAP study children.

For More Information

Details of the ECEAP Longitudinal Study to date are available in the ECEAP Longitudinal Study Year 3 Technical Report. Information provided in the technical report includes:

- a detailed description of the study design;
- support for the representativeness of the study sample to the entire ECEAP population;
- detailed results of study analyses;
- study instruments; and
- data tables.

For further information regarding ECEAP or the ECEAP Longitudinal Study, please contact:

ECEAP
Department of Community Development
906 Columbia Street S.W.
Mail Stop GH-51
Post Office Box 48300
Olympia, Washington 98504-8300
(206) 586-1557

ECEAP Advisory Committee Members

CHAIR:

Ms. Sandra Gaither
18835 Southeast 214
Renton, WA 98058

VICE-CHAIR:

Ms. Nancy Ashworth
1029 South Garry Road
Liberty Lake, WA 99019

Ms. Mary Carr
OSPI/Old Capitol Bldg.
P.O. Box 47200
Olympia, WA 98504-7200

Mr. Steve Anderson
Children's Therapy Center of Kent
26461 104th Avenue, Southeast
Kent, WA 98031

Ms. Carolyn Hale
Citizens Education Center Northwest
14330 12th Avenue, Northeast, # 302M
Seattle, WA 98125

Ms. Dorothy Hollingsworth
140 23rd Avenue, East
Seattle, WA 98112

Ms. Dana Connolly
Snohomish County Head Start
6502 222nd Street, Southwest
Mt. Lake Terrace, WA 98043

Dr. Sherrill Richarz
Department of Child and
Family Studies
Washington State University
Pullman, WA 99164-2010

Ms. Barbara Brauer
Kennewick School District
200 South Dayton
Kennewick, WA 99336

Mr. Ken Snyder, Director
Office of Community Programs, ACF
Department of Health and
Human Services
2201 Sixth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98121

Ms. Gina Peterson
P.O. Box 517
Stevenson, WA 98648

Ms. Darlene Brueher
Route 1, Box 51-Z
Aberdeen, WA 98520

Ms. Diane Plen, Ph.D.
Director, Project Turning Point
The Children's Alliance
172 20th Avenue
Seattle, WA 98122

Ms. Nanette Bullock
Olympic View Elementary
1330 Horne, Northeast
Olympia, WA 98506

Ms. Karen Tvedt
Office of Child Care Policy
DSHS/Children's Administration
MS: OB-41
Olympia, WA 98054

Ms. Jone Borhek
Department of Health
MS: LC-11B
Olympia, WA 98054

Ms. Janet Anderson
Adult Literacy
State Board of Community and
Technical Colleges
319 Seventh Avenue, MS: FE-11
Olympia, WA 98054

Mr. James Kelly
Washington State Commission
on African American Affairs
1011 10th Avenue Southeast
MS: EM-14
Olympia, WA 98504-8411

Ms. Mary McKnew
Governor's Office
MS: AQ-44
Olympia, WA 98504

Ms. Rhoda Miller
139 Whitman #B
Walla Walla, WA 99362

Ms. Bessima Peoples
P.O. Box 28762
Seattle, WA 98118

Ms. Kikora Dorsey
United Way
1001 Fourth Avenue, Ste. 3010
Seattle, WA 98154

Ms. Vicki Ibarra
Yakima Valley Farmworkers Clinic
518 West First Avenue
P.O. Box 190
Toppenish, WA 98948

Mr. Phil Bussey
Washington Round Table
1001 Fourth Avenue, South 3313
Seattle, WA 98154

Ms. Maria Garcia
Northwest Regional Primary Care
Association
4154 California Avenue, Southwest
Seattle, WA 98116

Ms. Ruth Harms
Child Abuse Neglect and Prevention
OSPI/Old Capitol Bldg.
P.O. Box 47200
Olympia, WA 98504-7200

Ms. Shirley Salomon
Bilingual Education
OSPI/Old Capitol Bldg.
P.O. Box 47200
Olympia, WA 98504-7200

ECEAP Contractors

Anita Jackson
HS/ECEAP Director
Early Childhood Opportunity
Northwest
314 East Holly Street, 2nd Floor
Bellingham, WA 98225
(206) 734-8396

Wendy Roedell
ECEAP Director
Puget Sound ESD
400 Southwest 152nd Street
Seattle, WA 98166-2209
(206) 439-3636

Sandy Stanelle
Program Manager
Enterprise for Progress
in the Community
2902 Castlevale Road
Yakima, WA 98902
(509) 248-3950

Robbin Dunn
HS/ECEAP Director
Mason/Thurston Early Childhood
1113 Legion Way, Southeast, Rm. 301
Olympia, WA 98501
(206) 753-7590

Larry Siroshton
HS/ECEAP Director
EOC of Clark County, Inc.
10621 Northeast Coxley Drive, Ste. 207
Vancouver, WA 99662-6100
(206) 896-9912

Patt Earley
HS/ECEAP Director
Community Colleges of Spokane
4410 North Market Street
Spokane, WA 99207-5829
(509) 533-8060/SCAN 271-8060

Joe Varano
Administrator
Snohomish County Human Services
2722 Colby Avenue, Ste. 104
Everett, WA 98201
(206) 388-7251/SCAN 649-7251

Harla Tumbleson
Acting Director
City of Seattle
618 Second Avenue, 6th Floor
Seattle, WA 98104-2222
(206) 684-0523

Jan Eyestone
HS/ECEAP Director
Walla Walla School District
421 South Fourth Street
Walla Walla, WA 99362-2907
(509) 527-3083

Francis Mathison
ECEAP Director
Lewis-Clark Early Childhood Program
1805 19th Avenue
Lewiston, ID 83501
(208) 743-6573

Louise Prather
ECEAP Director
Reliable Enterprises
1514 Lum Road
Centralia, WA 98531
(206) 736-1696

Frank Dieni
HS/ECEAP Director
Neighborhood House, Inc.
905 Spruce Street
Seattle, WA 98104
(206) 461-8456

Peggy Nelson
HS/ECEAP Director
Okanogan County Child Development
Association
5 West Central, P.O. Box 1844
Omak, WA 98841
(509) 826-2466

Mary Ashby
Director
Community Child Care Center
NE 1410 Stadium Way
Pullman, WA 99163
(509) 332-7005

Kay Higgins/Margarita Lopez
Granger School District #204
701 East Avenue, P.O. Box 400
Granger, WA 98932
(509) 854-1515 or 854-2512

Barbara Brauer
ECEAP Director
Kennewick School District #17
200 South Dayton
Kennewick, WA 99336
(509) 736-2284 or 736-2286

Paula Akerlund
ECEAP Director
Aberdeen School District
216 North G Street
Aberdeen, WA 98520
(206) 532-7690

Suzanne VanOrman
Director
Mid-Columbia Children's Council, Inc.
2809 Van Horn Drive
Hood River, OR 97031
(503) 386-2010

Bryan Nelson
Coordinator
Selah School District
105 West Bartlett Avenue
Selah, WA 98942-1117
(509) 697-0718

Debbra Picton
Superintendent
Manson School District
312 Quetilquason
P.O. Box A
Manson, WA 98831
(509) 687-3140

Sara Bartrum
Director
Chelan Douglas Child Services
Associaiton
1305 Kittitas Street
Wenatchee, WA 98801
(509) 663-5179

Sharon Patacsil
HS/ECEAP Director
United Indians of All Tribes
P.O. Box 99100
Seattle, WA 98199
(206) 285-4425

Enrique Garza
HS/ECEAP Director
Washington State Migrant Council
301 North First, Ste. 1
Sunnyside, WA 98944
(509) 837-8909 or 800-223-8515

Georgean Brown-Roth
HS/ECEAP Director
Lower Columbia College
P.O. Box 3010
Longview, WA 98632
(206) 577-2388

Kathy Tolgo
HS/ECEAP Director
Northeast Washington Rural
Resources
320 North Main
Colville, WA 99114
(509) 684-8421

Donald F. Miller
Olympic ESD #114
105 National Avenue, North
Bremerton, WA 98312
(206) 479-0993

Janet Thompson
ECEAP Director
Skagit Valley College
1201 East Pioneer Way
Oak Harbor, WA 98277
(206) 679-9771 or 385-2571

Janet Anderson
Clallam-Jefferson CAC
802 Sheridan, 1st Floor
Port Townsend, WA 98368
(206) 796-4545

Orson Giles
Tri-District Special Services
First and Jefferson
South Bend, WA 98586
(206) 875-5615

Rita Zimbleman
Children's House
P.O. Box 101
Eastsound, WA 98245
(206) 376-4744

Robert Dehning
Administrative Assistant
ESD #113
601 McPhee Road, Southwest
Olympia, WA 98502
(206) 586-2933

Marilyn Larson/Karin Carter
ESD 101, Special Services
West 1025 Indiana Avenue
Spokane, WA 99205
(509) 456-7086

Carol Wirth
HS/ECEAP Director
Kittitas County Head Start/ECEAP
507 Nanum
P.O. Box 835
Ellensburg, WA 98926
(509) 925-2262

Dr. Wynn Knowling
Dayton School District #2
609 South Second
Dayton, WA 99328
(509) 382-2507

Jeanni Roberts
HS/ECEAP Director
Kitsap Community Action Program
1201 Park Avenue
Bremerton, WA 98310
(206) 377-7667

Jada Rupley
Administrative Assistant
Early Childhood Program
ESD #112
1313 Northeast 134th Street
Vancouver, WA 98685-2788
(206) 573-1096